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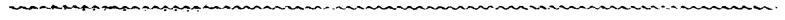
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ESSAY.

THERE is no work concerning Quakerism or the Quakers, which can fairly be considered entitled to rank as an historical treatise. There is, therefore, no source from which to receive immediate information as to the influence which they began to exert from the time of their origin, nor of the influence they have since continued to exert, upon the development of national life in the countries they inhabit. But there is much material for such a work, extending over the whole period of time, which has elapsed since the stormy epoch in which the Quakers first came together, amid the fierce conflicts of civil war, and the harsh uncharitableness of contending sects, down to the present moment, when the Society of Friends receives so largely the world's respect, and holds a position in the community the extreme opposite of that of the class of men who had been its original founders.

And even a slight research among this mass of material is sufficient to show, to a considerable degree of accuracy, the character and influence of this people.

In the outset, the searcher would probably be startled and almost shocked at the vagaries for which they were so often responsible; he would find constant evidence of crude and ill-considered thought reduced to actions full as inconsiderate, but his heart would warm toward this almost fanatical sect, when he found them undergoing suffering and persecution, such as almost

equalled the darkest the world has seen, and supporting their sufferings with a patience and unyielding endurance such as history affords no other example of. And if, in following the course of their succeeding history, he would lose some of that intense admiration, which glows within every honest heart as it becomes acquainted with the deeds of the martyrs, he would never lose that respect, the payment of which is a debt always due to the good citizen and the devoted Christian.

But let this search be conducted in a spirit of candid inquiry, and I believe it will satisfactorily appear, that what is reprehensible or narrow-minded in Quakerism, forms no part of its essential character; that these things are not the natural growth from its foundation stock, but are excrescences which have survived the age to which they belonged, by being adopted into the organization of a plant of more noble origin.

CHAPTER I.

IT was about the time of Henry VII, that the idea of reform may be said to have taken life in England. The reign of that monarch lies as a sort of neutral ground between the domain of the dark ages, and that pertaining to the present era of history. The turbulent spirit of the feudal Barons had been effectually laid to rest, and the spirit of inquiry or reform (for one implies the other), was beginning to creep from cell and cloister, and to afford occupation to the unemployed energies of the people. Little by little this spirit developed itself; and when Henry VIII wished to institute his new establishment, he found a population not unprepared to acquiesce in this revolution; a revolution which bears about it every mark of having been undertaken solely for the benefit of the monarch, insomuch as it did

but invest one despot with the power it had wrenched from another; for Henry became virtually the Pope of England,—nay, more—he claimed powers which the Pope himself had never dared to assume. According to the teaching of Cranmer, the King of England was the head and embodiment of the whole Church contained within that realm. He was the sole source of discipline,—the sole organ of government,—that is to say, he wielded over the Church a full, unmitigated despotism. All the Church functionaries were commissioned by him, held their offices at his pleasure, and by his death, their offices were considered vacated.*

Such a revolution can scarcely be considered a step toward either civil or religious liberty, but yet it had this advantageous effect,—that it accustomed the public mind to contemplate without flinching the greatest changes of state policy, and what was of much more importance, it brought the centre of Church government home to the doors of the people, enabling them to observe more closely the administration of that government, and giving them a greater interest in rectifying the abuses of which they might then find it guilty. And thus the new spirit of liberal thought received an all-important impulse from the hands of one of the most despotic of monarchs.

But the power which Cranmer had consented to place in the hands of the King, was not such as the clergy of a rich and powerful Church would long be willing to submit to. And accordingly, we find that during the reign of Elizabeth and James, the clergy had discovered a new dignity in their office. Throughout all those rapid changes in the professed religion of the state, which occurred during the reigns of Henry, Edward, and Mary, there were still found prelates who could follow as rapidly as the Crown might choose to lead; and to the vacillating character of

* Hallam, Vol. I, p. 186.

these men it is, that the Church of England owes that impalpable thing known as Apostolic succession. Basing their pretensions upon the fact of this succession, the clergy contended that ordination was something more than the mere solemnization of admission to office ; that it was a rite by which passed some mysterious qualification necessary to render the recipient a suitable officer of the Church, whether executive or legislative. For the Bishops exercised the legislative powers by means of convocations, formed of themselves and others of the higher clerical ranks, and claimed that the convocations were not answerable to Parliament for their decrees, but to the Crown alone, as the recognized head of the Church.

It needs no elaborate argument to prove that such powers claimed and exercised, would establish the clergy as a distinct class in the kingdom ; a class not liable to be brought into sympathy with the people, for it exercised the full power of self-perpetuation ; for it could admit whom it pleased into its ranks, and its ranks were open to none but such as were in full sympathy with the leaders of class ambition.

By these claims, also, the clergy became more independent of the Crown than they had been under Henry and Edward. The Crown had not, it is true, waived any actual prerogative, but when it began to be admitted that the Bishops, and they alone, possessed this mysterious power of transmitting the dignity of their own office, and even of the inferior offices in the Church, they assumed a new importance in the economy of government, for by a unanimous refusal to ordain, they might have evoked a storm which the Crown would have been little anxious to meet.

This transfer of Church government from the absolutism of the King, to what was practically the absolutism of the clergy, was a revolution which may seem to have had as little tendency to increase religious liberty, as that which placed the spiritual power in the hands of Henry VIII. But it was, nevertheless,

a movement in the same direction as that ; for as by that revolution, the centre and responsible source of Church government had been brought, from a thousand miles beyond the sea, home to their own doors, so had this removed the responsibility of actually governing the Church, from the hands of an irresponsible head, and laid it upon a class of men who could claim none of that irresponsibility with which the English Constitution invests its King.

In these revolutions, the latter of which was effected so imperceptibly as scarcely to have obtained the name, we may trace the slight degrees in which those who held the power of the keys were submitting to some influence at work among the people. Had not the people been willing to leave Rome, Henry could never have withdrawn them from that Church. Had they not been unwilling to allow so much power to remain with the throne, Elizabeth was not the person to forego it, even on behalf of "those faithful satraps, her bishops." These movements, then, were made in obedience to that instinctive sense, by which the people of England were providing for their liberties, by drawing to themselves the whole power of government.

But this tendency did not rest at the point then gained, for while the Bishops had been extending or consolidating their powers under the auspices of Elizabeth and James, a widespread schism had taken place among the lower orders of clergy. Even among the first of the Reformed clergy in England, there had been a division of sentiment, but this was rather confined to questions of form : one party desiring to mark as clearly as possible their separation from Rome, by abolishing all forms of worship or ritual observance which were employed by that Church ; the other thinking that such a course would shock the prejudices of the people, and contending that what was good in itself, did not become bad by being adopted among the Romish ceremonies. As time progressed, the governing body in the

Church adopted the latter class of opinion, and by persecution and exclusion, brought all the powers of the Episcopal organization to bear, in order to enforce uniformity among those who had received ordination. This endeavor to enforce, and this refusal to obey, continued with such persistence on both sides, that at the time* when Charles I came to the throne, almost all the learning and piety of the English Church had come under the censure of the Episcopacy, and the clergymen thus in disgrace, were supported by the sympathy of a large and influential portion of the people.

And it seems that it was not until they were forced into this collision with the governing power of the Church, that they began to deny the authority of the Government as then constituted, but by force of this collision, they were obliged to consider that if the Bishops were indeed acting from Divine appointment, then their behests must be received as carrying all the authority with which they were sought to be clothed, and those who had determined not to submit to these behests, saw no way of escaping from this conclusion, but by denying the authority of the whole Episcopalian organization of government.

They offered in its stead the Presbyterian form, and as party lines became more tightly drawn, they clothed their chosen form with all the honors and authority that had ever been claimed by that which they wished to supersede.† And thus the quarrel which began about wearing the surplice, the ring in marriage, and the sign of the cross in baptism, &c., ended in a fierce contention between bishops and presbyters for the control of the national government, and for the right to burn heretics in the name of the Lord.

This indeed seems a poor result to follow from this struggle of some seventy years' duration. To one of those religionists of the time of the Long Parliament, who could no more conform

* 1625.

† Hallam.

to the Presbyterian than to the Episcopalian, it would have seemed a matter of indifference whether the body of men who persecuted him acted through the establishment of Consistorial Courts, or through the establishment of Synods. Freedom of conscience was not more recognized by one party than the other; and while each complained of the uncharitableness of the other, neither would in any degree abate its own pretensions.

But by examining the plan of Church government proposed by the Presbyterians, it will appear that this body had taken still one more step in the direction marked by the previous reforms, that is to say, it brought the governing power more immediately under the control of the people.

It was in form nearly this: that the incumbents of a few neighboring parishes should be associated for the general supervision of the congregations under their charge, and for mutual support in carrying out the Church discipline. These associations were termed "Classes;" they were to be invested with some degree of coercive power, the degree and character of which I have not found distinctly stated; they were authorized to send representatives to a "Synod;" and the Synod would thus be composed of clergymen representing the several Classes of such a district as would form the diocese of a bishop, and seemingly the Synod was intended to have exercised much the same powers as those which belonged to the Bishops. The several Synods were to be represented in a "General Assembly," which was to constitute the law-giving power in the Church, and which should, as some at least contended, have in matters of Church polity complete precedence over Parliament, and control the full powers of the executive for the support of its decrees.

This organization was never, except very partially, carried into operation; for the Presbyterians were, at the moment of success, swept from power by a succeeding wave in the great

flow of popular feeling, of which they had been one of the first expressions.

But although the nation was at no time subject to this system, its importance in the national history is scarcely lessened on that account, for it shows what were the principles of one of the great reforming parties of that age of reformation. Evidently the tendency of the Presbyterian establishment was to popularize the "power of the keys," by making those who exercised this power more open to the control of those who were subject to it; for by it the power then vested in a few prelates would be distributed among the whole clergy, and even though the whole body of the clergy would still be liable to the influence of the pride of caste, though by virtue of their office they would still be likely to look upon the people as their peculiar patrimony, yet nevertheless the extent to which a large portion of them would necessarily mingle with the life and thought outside of their own peculiar ranks, would not fail to create in the body at large an amount of sympathy for and a deference to the wishes of the people, such as would never penetrate to the Bishops while dangling around the throne, or living in state at their official residences.

There may be seen in this proposed form of Church organization, an attempt to rejuvenate old ideas with the spirit of a new era. The clergy could not yet consent to doubt that God had appointed them a perpetual and sacred order for governing the Church, and yet they found themselves surrounded with a spirit of reform which was tending toward the declaration that the members of the Church were the only proper governors therefor, and from their endeavor to retain the spirit of reform within the institutions of the past, resulted the system of which we have been speaking; it was, however, like putting new wine into old bottles, and met with the like miserable failure as has followed all other such attempts.

During the progress of the war against the King, there grew into power a party who, having dared to risk everything in defence of their liberties, whether civil or religious, in a contest with the whole strength of a long-established prerogative, were not disposed to submit those liberties to the dominion of a clergy which owed its elevation to their exertions, especially as that clergy proclaimed its determination to exercise all the power of its predecessors, although it lacked that prestige of antiquity which was its predecessors' only hold upon the obedience of the nation.

It was, therefore, with this feeling of revolt against the dominion of any priesthood, that the Independents came into power,—a feeling which cannot be better expressed than in the terse answer of Cromwell to the Presbyterian clergy of Scotland :

“We look upon ministers as helpers of, not lords over the faith of God's people. I appeal to their consciences whether any denying their doctrines or dissenting from them will not incur the censure of a sectary. And what is this but to deny Christians their liberty, and to assume the infallible chair.”
 “Though an approbation from man hath order in it, and may be well, yet he that hath not a better than this, hath none at all.”*

And to escape from this “lordship,” usurped over the faith of God's people, the Independents resorted to the expedient of making the members of the priesthood “ministers,” in fact as well as in name; and this end was obtained by making the minister subject to the congregation, that is to say, each congregation was to be in itself a governing body, with authority to determine who should be its ministers. And they contended that the only limit that could be placed upon the power of the

* Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, Vol. I, p. 61.

congregation was the right of the magistrate to restrain and prevent acts which would threaten the public peace and safety.

In the whole march of human events, I think there is no grander procession than this, by which the English nation advanced, through the struggles of an hundred and fifty years, and by the alternate rise and fall of parties, each in its turn representing the same spirit of reform, onward to the annunciation of a form of Church government, which is, of all others, the surest safeguard of liberty, both civil and religious.

For there is no power more subtle than the power of priestcraft; and it is as true of Church as of civil government, that the unity of the executive and legislative powers tends inevitably to the employment of both for the complete subjugation of those who are so unfortunate as to live under such a disposition of government. A priesthood, once established with power to decide what are and what are to be the doctrines and profession of the Church, and with the further power to punish the non-acceptance or non-observance of their own decisions, will, so long as man remains a selfish being, fall into the hands of men whose sole end is to pervert these powers for the advancement of their own personal interests.

And for these reasons it is impossible to maintain religious liberty without the participation of the laity in the government of the Church. But it is by no means clear that the Independents acted from any just conception of the principles upon which liberty is to be maintained. Their rule was pre-eminently a despotism, controlled by military power; and thus in governing the State they directly violated the only principles which could justify their position in the Church. And though we may readily believe that the army, which composed both in power and in numbers the influential portion of the Independent party, had a true anxiety to advance the glory and welfare of England, and though many of the leaders may have sincerely joined in

this anxiety, yet the contempt which the latter manifested to every provision of the national Constitution, and the pious fury with which the former enforced their doctrines of freedom of conscience, had little calculated to establish those doctrines upon a permanent foundation, and are sufficient evidence that, though the Independents might be well fitted to be a scourge for tyranny, they were scarcely prepared to become martyrs for freedom.

In the further prosecution of this Essay, its object will be to consider, whether any other body of men arose to hold a position continuous with, and still more advanced than that which the Independents had succeeded in reaching; or whether the means which are now relied upon for the security of liberty, have resulted from the accumulated experience of mankind, without ever having been distinctly announced and supported by the creed and conduct of any political or religious sect.

CHAPTER II.

IN the preceding chapter, I have endeavored to trace the growth of religious reform in England, and to show that the ultimate end of such reform is that character of Church government, by which the congregation retains within itself the whole executive power of the keys, for this alone secures Church government from the danger of degeneration into Church tyranny; and also to show that while the Independents advocated this form of government, they neither appreciated the great principle upon which it is based, nor did they act upon similar principles as applied to the government of the State.

The object of this chapter is to show that the Quakers took that place in the history of the age, which the Independents

failed to obtain. The part they played in the history of that period may be considered, firstly, by showing that they were in full sympathy with the age, as may appear from a comparison of the history of their rise and settlement, with what is known of the characteristics which the national life assumed during that epoch. Secondly, by showing that they carried the tendency of the age to its ultimate and proper development, as may appear from a study of the principles which they maintained and promulgated. Thirdly, by showing that these principles had that influence upon the age which true principles, firmly maintained, never fail to command.

SECTION I. In the early part of the seventeenth century, the attention of the whole national mind of England was given up to the search of a "thorough, godly reformation." I believe that these very words were used by Archbishop Laud, in reference to the changes he sought to enforce in the established worship of England, but there can be little doubt that they express the sentiments from which he acted. Now, if Laud and his party were desirous of a godly reformation, much more was this the sentiment of that portion of the nation who opposed him in his efforts. And the intense desire which the Puritans entertained for a godly reform, that is, to establish a government in accordance with the will of God, led them to the study of the Old Testament, and induced them to imitate as far as possible the government of the Jews, being the only one which ever received directly the Divine sanction. Such influence had this study upon the Puritan sects, that the Old Testament was used by them, both as a statute-book and as a code of sumptuary laws.

Firstly. And the marked peculiarities which thus became stamped upon the Puritans, have been too strongly dwelt upon, both in history and fiction, to need any further illustration, but the fact never seems to have been clearly appreciated, that these peculiarities pertained also to the Quakers.

There were some points in which the Judaizing tendency had run into absurd extremes before the origin of the Quakers; and these extremes they did not adopt, such as the frequent fasts and sanctimonious observance of Sunday, enforced by the Presbyterians. But they nevertheless retained sufficient marks of this tendency, to show that their sympathies and affiliations were with the Puritan party. Thus, George Fox once, when ordered by a Judge to remove his hat, demanded to know where any, from Moses to Daniel, ever commanded that hats should be taken off as a token of respect,—a question which seems to have nonplussed the Judge.

But the most convincing proof that the Quakers shared in the Judaistic feeling of the Puritan party, is to be found in the claims which they advanced (impliedly at least), of possessing prophetic powers, and other gifts and privileges accorded to the prophets of the Jewish dispensation. These claims appeared chiefly in offering signs, as proof of the Divine character of their mission, or as confirmatory of their declarations of coming events. This was a practice which seems to have prevailed only among converts of a weak or unbalanced judgment, but yet even Fox says of himself, that “questions arose in my mind about gifts and prophecies, and I was tempted again to despair, as if I had sinned against the Holy Ghost;”^{*} from which it may be inferred, that in preaching without possessing any power of performing signs and wonders, he fell into the temptation of believing that these powers were necessary evidence of a true ministry,—a temptation to which he would scarcely have been exposed had not the disposition of the age been to demand such proof from its ministers. Also in a paper given forth to “such as made a scorn of trembling and quaking,”[†] Fox justifies this sign of conversion by the following citations: “Moses, who was

^{*} Journal, page 62.

[†] Journal, 184. (See also Journal, p. 344; Sewell, Vol. I, 207; Vol. II, 58, 64, 90.

judge over all Israel, trembled, feared, and quaked ; David, a king, trembled ; the prophet Jeremiah trembled ; he shook ; his bones quaked. Isaiah said, ' Hear ye the word of the Lord, all ye that tremble at his word.' " So also with Joel, Habakkuk, and Daniel ; and in the New Testament, he says, " Paul was among the Corinthians, in fear and in much trembling." The modes in which the inspiration of the Jewish prophets was manifested, were frequently imitated by the early Quakers in other ways than trembling. Not unfrequently in their writings, we find mention of the use of sackcloth and ashes as a means of warning, or for impressing their hearers with the truth of their mission. Evidences of this habit of moulding their lives by the examples of the Old Testament might be multiplied to a great extent, but I think sufficient has been said to show the identity of feeling between the Quakers and reforming sects.

Second. But this identity of sentiment between the Quakers and Puriſan sects, manifested itself quite as distinctly in another direction.

It may distinctly be assumed, from their mutual rejection of Church ceremonies, doing so for the same reason in each case, that these ceremonies seem to vitiate that spirituality of worship which all Christians are commanded to observe. The Presbyterians and Independents had gone to considerable lengths in simplifying these ceremonies, and in reforming the extravagancies which had been observed in the performance of them. But the Quakers, bearing the same repugnance to formalistic worship, carried their opposition to a much greater extent, and altogether denied the binding obligation of any ceremonies adopted by the Church of England. These ceremonies, beside being many of them shocking in themselves to persons who would choose a humble, Christian walk, had been associated in the minds of the people with all the usurpations of the Roman Church, and all the tyrannies of Charles, and his adviser, Laud,

and by this association, had become as detestable to the people of that day, as a title of nobility was to the canaille of Paris during the Reign of Terror. In attacking these ceremonies, therefore, the Quakers were moving directly in the path of popular sentiment, or rather in the path of such portion of the popular sentiment as was laboring for Church and State reform. Thus, too, in the refusal of the Quakers to adopt the ceremonies of private life, they were but carrying out more fully a reform begun by the Presbyterians.

Third. The part taken by the Quakers in the political life of the nation, exhibits also the same tone of thought, and seems to place them in the same relative position with the other sects of the day, as the criteria already given would seem to do.

The direct indications of their political sentiments are, indeed, very few, and it is not easy to gather from those indications what form of state government their preferences would have led them to adopt. But this want of sufficient facts to support any inference as to those preferences, is not to be attributed to any reluctance on their part to mingle in the political life of the nation, but is rather owing to their objection to taking oaths, and to their refusal to engage in any operations of the army and navy, for by this course they were effectually precluded from exercising any direct influence upon the action of government, whether as public officials, or members of Parliament, or military officers. But these restraints did not prevent them from bringing their influence to bear upon the management of the state, by other means more suited to their religious profession. These opportunities for public expression consisted mainly in presenting petitions to Parliament, voting for members of Parliament, whenever this privilege was accorded the nation, and writing constant letters to those who from time to time might be in power.

The fullest employment of this constitutional right of petition

was shown, in an effort made by the Quakers to obtain the abolition of tithes, for shortly before the Restoration, a petition to this effect was presented to Parliament, signed by seven thousand women, and twice so many men.

The right of voting could not have been exercised before the year of the Restoration, for Cromwell and the army ruled the nation, without permitting any such opportunity for the expression of the national desires. But it appears that in the year 1682,* the number of votes which the Society could poll in the city of London, was an important element of computation, on occasion of an election for sheriff. And Sewell asserts,† somewhat vaguely, that the Quakers at this time would not have suffered so much persecution, had they not persisted in voting against the Government.

But it was during the few years that immediately followed the rise of the Society, that the most active interest was manifested by its members in the management of the National Government; an interest which expressed itself in the letters of the early pamphleteers of the Society, of whom Edward Burrough and George Fox the younger, seem to have been the most prominent.‡ These writers were constant in addresses of warning and advice to Cromwell or the Parliament. Being the productions of men whose peculiar characteristic was the fulness of feeling with which they recognized the controlling presence of God among His works, these addresses are deeply tinged with religious feeling, and tend to force strongly upon their recipients a sense of their responsibility to God.

But these letters contain something more than an expression of religious warning, or an earnest avowal of interest for the

* Sewell, Vol. II, page 185.

† Ibid. page 183.

‡ See letters of George Fox, Edward Burrough, and George Fox the younger, as published in Sewell, or in the collections of their writings.

eternal welfare of the members of Government. They contain warnings of coming events, and threats as to the consequences to follow upon the non-observance of such lines of action as are advised therein. And this expressed in terms so strong and decided as could scarcely have been conceived, much less have passed unpunished, had they not been the expression of ideas widely disseminated among the people, and as such representing a class too numerous not to command respect.

Unless these letters are without meaning in connection with the circumstances under which they profess to be written; unless they are the mere wanderings of men whose religious emotions have over-balanced their common sense, they must be considered to prove the early Quakers as having entertained the most radical political doctrines of the day. The canons they lay down would not only necessitate a republic, but would demand that the republic should be a theocracy.

If the views which have been stated are correct, it would seem that their habits of life, the characteristics of their religious thought, and their political sympathies, entitled the Quakers to be ranked among the Puritan sects, giving thereby to the word ("Puritan") the signification in which it was then used, that is, to designate any who opposed the established order of government, whether in State or Church. And, if the writings of a few prominent men may be taken as an evidence of the feelings of the mass, they must have been among the most forward of these sects in maintaining, theoretically at least, the right of revolution. And this conclusion becomes more probable when the character of many of the early converts is considered in connection with it; for large numbers of the army, even of the superior officers, became Quakers, the most striking instance being the case of Colonel John Lilburn,* who suffered much for his violent opposition to Charles I, was imprisoned by Cromwell

* Sewell, Vol. I, 142.

for his red-republican tendencies, and became a Quaker while undergoing that imprisonment.

SECTION II. Such is the nature of the proof which would show that the Quakers did not live above or apart from the questions which agitated the minds of their fellow-men. And, under the requirements of this Essay, the proof of such a fact is not unimportant; for the parties of that time were not divided by questions which lead but indirectly to the support or attack of liberty; the men of that day were not confused by issues based upon nice distinctions, the ultimate bearing of which, upon the freedom of mankind, could only be reached through elaborate investigation: the issue then placed before the people was the broad and simple distinction between self-government and submission to a despot. By showing, therefore, with which party the sympathies of the Quakers were ranged, there can no longer be room for doubt as to the position held by them upon that great question of their day. And this proof is not the less conclusive because supported by evidence derived from their weaknesses.

But at the outset of this chapter I have claimed for the Quakers a higher place in the history of reform than could be granted them upon the considerations yet offered; for this would go no further than to establish that the Quakers were one of the many sects into which the Liberal party in England was at that time broken, and that, however much they differed in worship and discipline from the other sections of this reforming body, they still retained the same characteristic sentiments in favor of Church and State reform. This is but to rank them with the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, or even the more fanatical sects of the time.

In this section I shall endeavor to show that not only did they unite with these sects in their desires for a more complete toleration, but also that the principles upon which the Quakers based

their thought and action are those by whose truth alone does any national liberty become possible, and that it was the consistent advocacy of these principles which distinguished the Quakers from the other sects.

The Presbyterians and Episcopalians, in departing from the Church of Rome, had never abated any of the pretensions set up by that Church of a right to govern the consciences of its members; thus the dogma of auricular confession is not even yet disavowed by the Church of England; and the Presbyterian divines seem to have considered the consciences of their fellow-beings as peculiarly under their charge, for some of their most important works were solely composed of solutions given to questions of conscience, and a public conscience office was opened for a while in Oxford, to which those who were in doubt about the rectitude of any course of conduct might apply for information and relief.* Facts such as these sufficiently illustrate the continued pretensions of the clergy to form a separate and superior class in the Church as constituted in this stage of man's existence. And these pretensions were expressed in such forms of Church government as were most suitable for allowing them their full scope, in each case the ecclesiastical government demanding a share in the government of the state, in order that their assumed control of men's consciences might be enforced by the energies of physical power.

But this unity of the powers of State and Church was fraught with too much danger to the liberties of the subject, to be consistent with the prejudices of an age which valued its liberties so much above the prerogatives of Church or Crown, as to bring both King and Primate to the block for their violations of the Constitution. And, in pursuance of the spirit of these acts, the Independents claimed for each congregation the right of self-government.

* Orme's *Life of Baxter*, Vol. II, p. 133.

And this claim covers the whole ground necessary for the support of religious liberty. For although a congregation of laymen may be as much disposed to enforce their opinions by physical power as any body of clergy would be, yet the congregation is precluded, by the very manner of its constitution, from ever obtaining the necessary power; for no congregation has a controlling power over any other, and the moment, therefore, when the dominion of a congregation becomes insupportable to any part of it, that part possesses the full right and power to separate itself from all such dominion or control.

And it is this constitution of the congregation which renders the congregational government* that form, which is the ultimate end of all efforts for reform. For the congregation draws its vitality from its individual members; its action is the united action of all or of a large portion of its members. Any form of government by which the clergy or the state government provides for the wants of a congregation, denies the individual some portion of his right of action, and is therefore to that extent despotic; and the congregational is therefore the only form of government which recognizes and allows full scope to the right of individual opinion and expression.

This was the right which George Fox proclaimed when, about the time of the beginning of his ministry, he entered a church in Nottingham and heard the minister take the text,† “We have also a more sure word of prophecy;” and tell the people that “this was the Scriptures by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions.” And the Lord’s power was so mighty upon him and so strong, that he could not hold, but was made to cry out, “Oh, no; it is not the Scriptures!” and told them that

* Under this denomination I would include any form of Church government by which the congregation controls the appointment of the minister, the education of its children, and the disbursement of the church-moneys.

† Fox’s Journal, 76.

it was the Holy Spirit. As Bancroft has said, this was a principle containing "a moral revolution; if it fostered self-love and fed enthusiasm, it also established absolute freedom of mind, trod every idolatry under foot, and entered the strongest protest against the forms of a hierarchy."* And in this last sentence of Bancroft's lies expressed the whole testimony borne by the seventeenth century on behalf of religious toleration. For the forms of a hierarchy, or priestly government, proclaim themselves intolerant by their very claim to existence; thus Archbishop Whately, in his treatise on Logic, gives, as an example of some rule, the following strain of argument: "If the people would come to God, they must obey His law; if they would obey His law, they must understand its provisions; if they would understand its provisions, they must set apart a class of men to study and expound them."† Never did a powerful mind set forth more strongly the weakness of its position. And yet in these few words is expressed the whole strength of priestly claims to study, to expound and govern; for with equal truth he might have continued his chain of argument: If a class of men must be set apart to study and explain, their explanations must be correct; if their explanations are correct, the people would do wrong not to receive them; if the people do wrong, they should be punished,—punished, of course, by those who know what is right; and thus is established priestly power, in duty bound to burn, torture, and eradicate.

But by what assumption is it that he says, "A class must be set apart," &c., if it is not founded on the premise that individuals cannot, each sufficiently for himself, obtain a knowledge of the will of God, or in other words of "the provisions of His law?" Now, if individual men cannot obtain this knowledge, how are the members of a peculiar class to obtain it? Surely in one of these two ways: either they receive from the Almighty

* Vol. II, p. 334.

† I quote from memory.

at the time of their appointment some power of communicating with Him superior to that accorded to other men, or else they become qualified by their studies, and the training thus given to their reasoning powers, to understand that which is totally dark to those who have not gone through this process. By one or the other of these modes must come that superiority which is the basis of all authority; and upon one ground or the other has every priesthood based its pretensions. But if the second be correct, what becomes of the Scripture, in which we are told that no man can by searching find out God? But by the first claim we would be carried back to the Jewish dispensation, and instead of one Mediator between God and man, we should have a whole clergy full,—mediators for instruction, encouragement, and promise, as some Protestant clergy now claim to be, but soon becoming mediators for sacrifice and the conveyance of pardon, as the Roman clergy claim.

A separate class is, therefore, not necessary in the Christian Church,—by the coming of Christ, the necessity which had before existed was done away,—and Fox announced the true reason why this necessity exists no longer, when he proclaimed that the sure word of prophecy, the “out-speaking” of the God-appointed man, was no longer to be heard from the outside world, but was drawn from the communion of man with the Holy Spirit of God.

God’s revelation of Himself to man is, therefore, the basis of man’s right to liberty, for by the communion of any individual man with God, is swept away any right which other men may claim to dictate to, or control his actions; if man is capable of receiving intimations of His will from the Supreme Ruler of the universe, it follows of necessity that while acting under these intimations, he neither is nor ought to be responsible to any inferior power; neither does he become responsible to any inferior power by the mere fact of disobedience to these intimations of

the superior power, for he whose commands are broken, is the only one having right to punish for the breach.

Nor can this principle be reduced to the absurd, by claiming that it would overthrow all government on earth, for so far as the intercourse of God with man is imperfect, so far as man is liable to fail in his love towards his Maker, and therefore liable to fail in his duty toward his neighbor, so far does it become necessary to establish such restraints upon his free action, as will enforce the observance of these duties toward his neighbor. Such is the source of human law and government, and therefore, when the restraints which it is established to prescribe, exceed the object of its establishment, and undertake to control or define the duty of man to God, then these restraints become no longer lawful nor binding upon the conscience.

These deductions follow necessarily from the principles enunciated by Fox, and that this sequence was fully appreciated and accepted by those who adopted those principles, is plainly shown by the fourteenth proposition of Barclay.

“Since God has assumed to Himself the power and dominion of the *conscience*, who alone can rightly instruct and govern it, therefore it is not lawful for any whomsoever, by virtue of any authority or principality they bear in the government of this world, to force the *consciencies* of others ; and therefore, all killing, banishing, fining, imprisoning, and other such things which are inflicted upon men for the alone exercise of their *conscience* or difference in *worship* or *opinion*, proceedeth from the spirit of Cain, the murderer, and is contrary to the truth ; providing always that no man under the pretence of *conscience* prejudice his *neighbor* in his life or estate, or do anything destructive to, or inconsistent with *human society*, in which case the *law* is for the transgressor, and *justice* is to be administered upon all without respect of persons.”

It was by the proclamation of these principles that the

Quakers became the vanguard of the Reformation, for by doing so, they carried the Reformation on to its proper development, and justified the preceding phases of reform.

Until this time, the Reformation had not, in its contest with the Church of Rome, taken the high ground which could alone justify its disruption of that Church. Among the masses of the people, its strength seems to have laid in the abhorrence they felt toward the excesses of the clergy. Thus, Henry VIII appointed commissions to investigate and report upon the private life of the convents, and it was upon the report of the excesses of which those houses were guilty that he justified the confiscations, by which he broke the power of the Roman Church in England. These confiscations and other similar acts of the Continental Reformers, were in direct opposition with the assumed infallibility of the Roman Church, and a direct denial of its right to force the consciences of men. But so soon as the Reformers not only began to disagree between themselves, but even to force their opinions upon those who disagreed with them, then the force of their protest against the tyranny of Rome was taken away, and their pretensions would even lend additional strength to those of Rome, for if any Church organization would have the right to persecute, it would be that which could boast a continuance down from the hands of the Apostles. By their persecutions, the Churches of Saxony, Geneva, and England admitted that unity of sentiment was a thing possible and desirable in the Church militant, and were, therefore, unable to answer Rome when she claimed that, as unity of sentiment existed only within her bounds, therefore she was the only true Church.

But Fox declared that unity was not possible nor desirable, except as it is attained by the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the individual mind; and therefore, the Church can claim to be infallible only so far as the enlightened minds of its members

give a concordant expression. But that each member, following the leadings of the Holy Spirit to the extent of his capacity, is as to himself infallible, though still imperfect, for perfection implies not only freedom from sin, but freedom from error.

Strong, therefore, in the individual infallibility of the member, and the derivative infallibility of the Church, Fox would not, in his discussions with the Roman clergy, submit to be questioned as to the foundation of his ministry, but demanded to know "whether the Church of Rome was not degenerate from the Church in the Apostles' time?"* and when this was denied, he would ask: "Are you then in the same purity, practice, power, and spirit that the Church in the Apostles' time was in?" To this they could not answer "yes," and had they done so, the retort was ready: "Prove then the righteousness of your works by the precepts which the Apostles have given." To have done this would have been impossible, and yet Fox proposed no harder tests than he was willing to submit himself to; no harder than every Church, than every individual Christian must be prepared to meet. And this simple test, which is as applicable to the individual as to the Church, was the announcement of a right in every man higher than all the pretensions of Rome.

Such being the principles of the Quakers, there could be no other form of Church government than the Congregational, open for their adoption. And with them, therefore, the freedom of the congregation was incidental, only to their better understanding the nature of man's constitution, and of the powers of the civil magistrate resulting therefrom.

But the Independents, on the contrary, set up the Divine appointment of this form of government as the sole cause of their breaking from other Churches, and thus took a position which they could only support by authority of a few dubious

* Fox's Journal, 300, 350 (years '58 and '61).

passages of Scripture, or upon the still more dubious authority of tradition, endeavoring to prove by these means that the earliest form of government known in the Church had been the Congregational. There can be but little doubt that they were right in thus interpreting the intimations given in the Bible as to the character and constitution of the early Churches. But whether right or wrong, it was an unfortunate attempt thus to set up another form of government, with no other claim for acceptance than that it was similar to the early form of Church government, for this claim had already been put forward by Papacy, Episcopacy, and Presbytery, and to rely on such an argument was, therefore, at that time, peculiarly infelicitous. It was like the efforts of a drowning man endeavoring to support himself, by clinging to a piece of wreck already overloaded; however just his claim to support may be, it is clear that to insist on it will result in disaster to himself as well as destruction to others.

Some such an effect as this among the religionists of England seems to have resulted from the teachings of the Independents, for in all that the Independents were found to be weak, the sects which had existed before them could be shown to be much weaker. The Independents offered to the nation a form of Church government, satisfactory in itself to the jealous susceptibilities of the most susceptible classes, but yet they failed to carry out the full work of the Reformation, because of their endeavor to sustain that form of government upon an unsatisfactory (because disputable) foundation. But notwithstanding this lack of a full appreciation of the cause for which they were embarked, the attack thus made against old institutions had a vast influence in weakening the hold till then maintained by the previous forms of government upon the reverence of the people. For by setting up the right of the congregation to self-government, they came into direct opposition with the claims of the clergy to govern by a Divine right.

This denunciation of the clergy as a governing class, seems to have been accompanied by a dim sense of the true relation between the individual and the Church, and the concurrent force of these new ideas had a most startling influence upon the body of religious professors throughout the nation, for in a very short space of time, the whole country was filled with fantastic sects, and fragments of sects almost without number.

But however fearful or unexpected this state of the nation would have been to a Christian observer of that time, it was nothing which need now occasion any surprise; for it must be remembered, that from the time when Joseph stood before the throne of Pharaoh, down to the times of Cromwell, the history of the world has, with but small exception, been the history of nations whose chief polity was priestcraft, governing monarch and people with equal power.

In the excitement, then, which accompanied the casting away these bonds of some four thousand years, it is not wonderful that religious profession should have assumed forms of uncouth extravagance.

It has been well said that the religious excitement produced by the Reformation was not capable of such restraint as would have confined it to minds able to bear it without injury, but of necessity extended to others whose "passions or imaginations were more powerful than their understandings." It has always been thus to some extent in the history of reform,—the dawn of a coming change is like the rising of the sun among the mountains, where vivid colors flash for a moment among the hills, and then sink from sight, sharp peaks and rough crags stand prominently forth, and the darkness of deep crevices comes boldly out into the early light, while every hilltop breaks and distorts the rays, until the whole vision is confused with fantastic lights and shades. Analogous causes account for the fanaticism so prevalent during the early part of Fox's ministry,

and which showed itself in the many sects of the day : Vanists, Seekers, Ranters, Muggletonians, and others too numerous for mention.

The existence of these numerous and excited sects proves that the people were giving a deep attention to considering questions of religion and state government, but the conduct of the sects proves also that this attentive consideration was ill-directed and urged on by an ungoverned excitement. Both religion and common sense were violated in applying true principles to evil practice ; falsehood was based upon truth, and truth supported by falsehood, in confusion apparently inextricable, so that at length the condition of the nation seemed to proclaim, that religious liberty was a wild chimera, only to be desired by those who wished to obtain indulgence for their extravagance, or immunity for their sins. If, then, England escaped from witnessing the violence of the German Anabaptists, repeated with a larger popular support, and followed by a more complete reaction than attended the excesses of those people, and if in this escape, she and her colonies have become the main stay of religious and civil liberty throughout the world, let the honor be given to those men who demonstrated that the most perfect order could co-exist with the fullest liberty, and who, by the force of a holy enthusiasm, gathered together those discordant elements, and strengthened them to meet their last and fiercest struggle with the power of persecution.

SECTION III. But if Fox and his fellow-laborers had done no more than enunciate principles whose necessary result is liberty in State and Church, and if those who accepted those principles had done no more than to accept them as abstract truths, the Quakers would have been much less the honored instruments of an important revolution than they may now claim to have been. For what they accepted as true they resolutely put into practice, and supported the principles they announced, not by

violence, which would be liable to be overcome by greater violence, but by a quiet endurance, which no violence could ever overcome.

Until the Restoration, the persecution of the Quakers does not seem to have extended beyond the bounds of that testing operation, through which all new things must pass, whether they be inventions of the intellect or discoveries in the world of thought, before being received as bearing an approved value.

The trials incurred while undergoing this earliest, and, so to speak, educational period of the life of Quakerism, may be briefly summed up under the following heads :

As first, the injuries inflicted at the hands of the mob, to which those who travelled as ministers were most especially exposed, for they seem only to have been incurred in remote and generally hilly districts, where the people had been too much secluded from the expansive influence of the public commotions to have escaped from the control of their pastors, or to have learned the importance of free religious thought and expression.

Again : the laws against vagabonds were sometimes strained to such a pitch as to afford pretexts for the arrest and annoyance of ministers. But so manifest an abuse of law could seldom find justices sufficiently neglectful of duty to sanction it, and could not, therefore, have occasioned much inconvenience.

Thirdly. There were also instances where sailors or soldiers, who had become Quakers, had suffered for refusing to perform the duties of their professions ; but this refusal does not seem at that time to have followed necessarily upon an acceptance of the general truth of the Quaker principles.

Parliament had at one time under consideration the propriety of abolishing tithes, but had never advanced so far as the accomplishment of such a purpose. The impropiators of tithes, therefore, and such of the clergy as still retained their benefices, possessed a fourth and more serious means for the trial of

Friends, by continued distraint and imprisonment in default of the payment of what seemed to them a portion of their lawful income. After the return of the Episcopal establishment to power, this distraint for tithes was most vigorously exercised against those who refused to pay them;* but during the continuance of the Commonwealth there was too large a part of the ruling party in sympathy with the views of the Quakers on this subject to allow of this means for persecution being pressed to a very great extent.†

Charges of blasphemy were also occasionally preferred against the Quakers, as in the well-known case of James Naylor; and the sentence passed upon him is sufficient evidence of how terrible an engine this prosecution would have been in the hands of those who might wish to molest the Quakers, had they been able to substantiate such charges. But blasphemy is a crime so indefinite in its nature, and proofs of its commission would be liable to receive such different constructions from those whose duty it would be to condemn, that we find few convictions for such alleged offences; and, so far as I have found, none of these convictions were followed by severe punishments, except that before referred to.

From these sources sprang most of the sufferings which befell the Quakers during the Commonwealth; sufferings which were manifestly not of the character to which the full idea of "persecution" is usually applied, for they were not inflicted by any organized power, either in Church or State, and were the expression of an individual, and therefore petty malevolence, rather than the action of a government determined to overcome all opposition to its established forms or cherished designs.

But soon after the restoration of the King, the acts of the new

* Fox's Journal, p. 374 (year 1663).

† Orme's Life of Baxter, Vol. II, p. 256.

Government announced that a spirit was to rule the nation very different from that which had so lately been dominant. The unbounded joy and loyalty with which the nation had received the King, as their only escape from anarchy or despotism, had resulted in the return of a Parliament devoted to the Crown, and wholly opposed to everything tinctured with Puritanical thought, or which bore the impress of a period they regarded in no other light than as a hideous interregnum.

Had, therefore, the King been ever so well disposed to fulfil the promise of toleration that he had given at Breda, he would have found it no easy task, in view of the feelings which controlled Parliament and the majority of the nation. But Charles had no such disposition. It is true that for a few months after his return he encouraged a conference between the Episcopalian and the Presbyterian clergy, the object of which was to search for some basis by which the Dissenters, or at least the Presbyterians, might be included within the pale of the National Church; but, after some months of discussion, it ended without success, and there can be no doubt that such was the desire of Charles so soon as he found himself firmly established upon the throne. And no sooner did he find his power thus established than he began that pursuit of arbitrary authority which had resulted in the humiliation of his grandfather and the death of his father. That he followed this object with all the tenacity that his vacillating character was capable of, is shown by the treaty of Dover, concluded on the tenth anniversary of his restoration. By it he consented to become a Romanist, and virtually a vassal of Louis XIV, in return for an engagement on the part of that monarch to assist him with men and money against any insurrection of his subjects.

By this treaty Charles committed himself much further against the liberties of the nation than even his first, and therefore much less any succeeding Parliament, would have been willing to follow

him. For greatly as were the ruling classes opposed to the Puritans, they were fully as much attached to the national honor, and disposed to maintain that honor and their Church establishment as heartily against Rome as against the Dissenters, valuing the forms of worship, for the observance of which they had suffered exile or proscription, even more than their allegiance to the King, for whom they had risked their lives.

The national sentiment was therefore, during Charles's reign, divided between three classes: first, the Romish party, that derived the greater part of its importance from the favor of the King; second, the Church of England party, composed of the ecclesiastics and the greater part of the gentry; third, the Dissenters, who were excluded from taking any actual share in the Government, but exercised a very important indirect influence by their numbers, learning, and honesty of character.

Such seems to have been the condition of the nation throughout the reign of Charles, and the correct analysis of the course of public events during his reign seems to be nearly this: That, by means of dissimulation, or violence whenever violence was safe, Charles was endeavoring to gain absolute power, and to draw the nation under the ecclesiastical dominion of the Pope.* That the great mass of the Episcopalian clergy and laity had been so deeply grounded in the faith of passive obedience to the King, and of the Divine right of his succession, as to be unable to offer that resistance to his encroachments demanded by the national liberties; nay, more, under the instigation either of ill-will toward the Dissenters, or of devotion to the Establishment

* The two designs were scarcely more separable than the Siamese twins. To prove or illustrate this would occupy too much space; but it may be remarked that there is no liberal government in the world which does not recognize toleration as its "*raison d'être*," no despotic government which does not support itself by a national religion.

and the Crown, around which all its traditions centred, the Episcopalian (or Country) party had in Parliament supported the King in many acts totally irreconcilable with the liberties of the people ; and that the Dissenters having as great a jealousy of the interference of any foreign power in their nation's affairs, as had the Country party, much exceeded that party in detestation of the formalistic worship of Rome, and in their scrutiny of the manner in which the King exercised his prerogative.

If, therefore, the influence of the Crown had been able to force the Dissenters to give up their independence of thought and life, and had succeeded in so far breaking their spirit as to force them into the pale of the English Church, there can be little doubt, that by a continuance of the same pressure from the throne, the retrograde movement would not have been arrested until the whole nation had been once more lodged under the protecting wing of the Roman Church.

The liberties of England, therefore, depended upon the constancy of the Dissenters in their opposition to the combined power of the King and the Church ; for, heedless of the trap they were laying for themselves, the supporters of the Church did not hesitate to persecute the Dissenters in every way. One of the most remarkable instances of this heedlessness for the future, was shown by the Act of Uniformity,* passed the second year of Charles's reign, by which all ministers of religion and all officers in employ of the Government were obliged to take the oath of uniformity, beginning thus : " I do declare that it is not lawful, upon any pretext whatsoever, to take arms against the King, and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him." Had all who took this oath observed its provisions, James the Second might have died upon the throne of England.

* 13 and 14 Charles II, chap. 4.

But I am already trenching upon the limits of the Essay, and cannot therefore go into any exposition of the general history of the Dissenters, through their twenty-five years of trial and suffering. It will suffice to show that the Quakers bore a portion of these sufferings, fully commensurate with their numbers. But more than this may be shown, so much even as to justify the claim, that in the amount of suffering undergone and in the constancy of their endurance, they stood as pre-eminently above the other dissenting sects, as they did in the fulness of their appreciation of the true character of freedom, and of the intercourse between God and man.

I shall not attempt to confirm this by particular instances of suffering. These may be found almost without number by simply turning over the leaves of any of the early Quaker chronicles; for it is not by a few instances of intense affliction that the case could be made out: any of the sects of that day could have produced enough to fill such an essay as this. It was in the unflinching spirit with which they bore multitudinous affliction, that the Quakers' claim to distinction lies. And as evidence of this spirit, and this claim to be distinguished above their fellow-sufferers, I shall quote the testimony of a few authors, all of whom shall be truthful men, and some of them by no means partial to the Quakers.

Speaking of the year 1682, Sewell makes the following statement:

"Thus this year came to an end. All other Protestant dissenters were now suppressed; for they were restrained from exercising any public worship, and some there were who in their nocturnal meetings would pray God that it might please Him to keep the Quakers steadfast, that so they might be a wall about them, that other dissenters might not be rooted out. But the said people continued now so valiant and without fainting, that some of their persecutors have been heard to say, that the

Quakers could not be overcome, and that the Devil himself could not extirpate them.”*

That this is not the mere flourish of a partisan writer, is established upon the testimony of Baxter, than whom there were few of their contemporaries less disposed to speak favorably of the Quakers, both by his natural disposition and acquired prejudice.

“And here the Quakers did greatly relieve the sober people for a time; for they were so resolute, and so gloried in their constancy and sufferings, that they assembled openly at the Bull and Mouth, near Aldersgate, and were dragged away daily to the common jail; and yet desisted not, but the rest came the next day nevertheless; so that the jail at Newgate was filled with them. Abundance of them died in prison, and yet they continued their assemblies still. . . . But thus the Quakers so employed Sir K. B. and the other searchers and prosecutors, that they had the less leisure to look after the meetings of soberer men; which was much to their present ease.”†

The editor of Baxter’s Life remarks in a note, “Had there been more of the same determined spirit among others, which the Friends displayed, the sufferings of all parties would sooner have come to an end. The Government must have given way, as the spirit of the country would have been effectually roused.”

There are sufficient data for believing that had Sir K. B. been able, by any possible means, to find any meetings of “soberer men,” he would have disturbed them, as well as those of the Quakers. Thus, on one occasion Baxter and Bates had been requested to meet with a few other ministers for prayer at the bedside of a dying woman. By some unforeseen occurrence they were prevented from attending, and thus missed

* Sewell, Vol. II, page 186. This was the third year before the death of Charles.

† Orme’s Life of Baxter, Vol. I, page 223.

being arrested for holding a conventicle. Baxter says of this occurrence: "What a joy would it have been to them that reproached us as Presbyterians, seditious schismatics, to have found but such an occasion as praying with a dying woman, to have laid us up in prison!" It is a fair inference that Baxter performed the duties of his office either not at all, or else so secretly that not even such an occasion as this could be found against him.

Sometimes the Dissenters descended to such petty shifts as to place bread, cheese, and tobacco upon a table, in order that if disturbed they might be able to make their meeting for worship pass for a social gathering. The condition to which they allowed themselves to be reduced is forcibly shown in the history of Neal.

The non-conformist ministers* did what they could to keep themselves within the compass of the law.† "They preached frequently twice a day in large families, with only four strangers and as many under the age of sixteen as would come; and at other times in places where people might hear in several adjoining houses. But after all infinite mischiefs ensued; friendships between neighbors interrupted; there was a general distrust and jealousy of each other; and sometimes upon little quarrels servants would betray their masters and throw their affairs into distraction."

By so anxious an endeavor to keep within the compass of the law, they tacitly acknowledged its binding force, and thus actually became law-breakers, by privately eluding that which they publicly professed to obey.

How strongly this evasive conduct contrasted with the behavior of the Quakers, is shown by the same historian. Thus:

* History of the Puritans, Vol. II, p. 551.

† 17 Charles II, chap. 2. The Conventicle Act. It applied as fully to the Quakers as any other sects.

“ The behavior of the Quakers was very remarkable, and had something in it which looked like the spirit of martyrdom. They met at the same place and hour as in times of liberty, and when the officers came to seize them, none of them would stir; they went all together to prison; they stayed there till they were dismissed, for they would not petition to be set at liberty, nor pay the fines set upon them, nor so much as the prison fees. When they were discharged they went to their meeting-house again as before; and when the doors were shut up by orders they assembled in great numbers in the street before the doors, saying they would not be ashamed nor afraid to meet together in a peaceable manner to worship God; but, in imitation of the prophet Daniel, they would do it more publicly because they were forbid. Some called this obstinacy; others, firmness; but by it they carried their point, the Government being weary of contending with so much resolution.”

Then follows a full account of the trial of Penn and Mead, and the appeal of their jurors against the fines imposed on account of their verdict, and Neal closes by remarking: “ This was a noble stand for the liberty of the subject in very dangerous times, when neither law nor equity availed anything.”

In another place, when speaking of an act passed especially against the Quakers, on account of their not taking oaths, he says :

“ This act had a dreadful influence upon that people, though it was notorious they were far from sedition or disaffection to the Government. George Fox, in his address to the King, acquaints His Majesty that three thousand and sixty-eight of their friends had been imprisoned since His Majesty's restoration;* that their meetings were daily broken up by men with clubs and arms, and their friends thrown into the water and trampled under foot, which gave rise to their meeting in the open streets. Another narrative was printed which says, that

* About two years.

more than four thousand two hundred Quakers were imprisoned, and of them five hundred were in and about London and the suburbs, several of whom were dead in the jails. But these were only the beginning of sorrows."

Much more testimony might be gathered, both from Quaker and other writers, tending still to establish this contrast between the manner in which the Quakers encountered their sufferings, and the conduct of other Dissenters under similar circumstances, but enough has already been given to establish the impartiality of a few lines I wish to quote from Barclay. As his fourteenth proposition has been given in the preceding section of this chapter, in order to show clearly what were the views of the Quakers of that day, upon the subject of civil and religious liberty, I have thought it not inappropriate that the noble sentences with which he concludes the argument supporting that proposition should also be given in evidence, to prove that as they thought, so they acted; that what they professed with their lips, they manifested in their deeds, hallowed their professions by their sufferings, and sealed them with their blood.

Thus he says: "For so soon as God revealed his *truth* among them, without regard to any opposition whatsoever, or what they might meet with, they went up and down as they were moved of the Lord, preaching and propagating the *truth* in market-places, highways, streets, and public temples, though daily beaten, whipped, bruised, haled, and imprisoned therefor. And when there was anywhere a church or assembly gathered, they taught them to keep their meetings openly, and not to shut the door, nor do it by stealth, that all might know it, and those who would might enter. And as hereby all just occasion of fear of plotting against the Government was fully removed, so this their courage and faithfulness in not giving over their meeting together (but more especially the presence and glory of God manifested in the meeting, being terrible to the consciences

of the persecutors), did so weary out the malice of their adversaries, that oftentimes they were forced to leave their work undone. For when they came to break up a meeting, they were obliged to take every individual out by force, they not being free to give up their liberty by dissolving at their command; and when they were haled out, unless they were kept forth by violence, they presently returned peaceably to their place. Yea, when sometimes the magistrates have pulled down their meeting-houses, they have met the next day openly upon the rubbish, and so by innocency, kept their possession and ground, being properly their own, and their right to meet and worship God being not forfeited to any, so that when armed men have come to dissolve them, it was impossible for them to do it, unless they had killed every one; for they stood so close together, that no force could move any one to stir until violently pulled thence; so that when the malice of their opposers stirred them to take shovels, and throw the rubbish upon them, there they stood unmoved, being willing if the Lord should so permit, to have been there buried alive witnessing for Him. As this patient, but yet courageous way of suffering, made the persecutors' work very heavy and wearisome unto them, so the courage and patience of the sufferers, using no resistance, nor bringing any weapons to defend themselves, nor seeking any ways revenge upon such occasions, did secretly smite the hearts of the persecutors, and made their chariot-wheels go on heavily. But on the contrary, most Protestants, when they have not the allowance and toleration of the magistrate, meet only in secret and hide their testimony; and if they be discovered, if there be any probability of making their escape by force (or suppose it were by cutting off those that seek them out), they will do it, whereby they lose the glory of their sufferings, by not appearing as the innocent followers of Christ, nor having a testimony of

their harmlessness in the hearts of their pursuers, their fury by such resistance is the more kindled against them."

Such was the difference between the behavior of the Quakers, and that of the other Dissenters; a difference which must inevitably have resulted in bringing the whole fury of the persecution upon the Quakers, and in lessening to a very great degree the trials of those who were less resolute. And therefore, when the historians quoted mention the relief afforded by the constancy of the Quakers, they do but bear witness to a truth we might rely upon without their aid in establishing it, but yet, having given their testimony, that testimony becomes the most satisfactory which can be adduced, inasmuch as it was given by those who were rather inclined to censure than to praise.

Later writers have also recognized the important sphere which the Quakers have occupied in the history of the world,—important both as to the truths they have promulgated, and as to the endurance by which they triumphed in the maintenance of those truths. Thus Bancroft says:

"The rise of the people called Quakers, is one of the memorable events in the history of man. It marks the moment when intellectual freedom was claimed unconditionally by the people as an inalienable birthright. To the masses in that age, all reflection on politics and morals presented itself under a theological form. The Quaker doctrine is philosophy summoned from the cloister, the college, the saloon, and planted among the most despised of the people. Intellectual freedom, the supremacy of the mind, universal enfranchisement, these three points include the whole of Quakerism, as far as it belongs to civil history."

If, then, Quakerism has borne so noble a protest against despotism in civil history, surely no one will pretend that it has been less conspicuous in its protest against the evils of despotism as they appear in the religious history of the world.

Bunsen, too, speaking of the English revolution, says: "But even among the ranks of the Presbyterians, we can point to enlightened defenders of religious liberty in those ages, and at their head one of the greatest of Christian poets and philosophers, Milton."

"This toleration was certainly preached in a still purer form by its apostles and martyrs, the fathers of the Society of Friends, George Fox, who began to preach publicly on this subject in 1650, and his two disciples, Robert Barclay, the author of the *Apology* for his sect, and William Penn, the father and apostle of Pennsylvania."* And, in confirmation of this position, he quotes at length those passages from the *Apology* which have already been given.

I take the more pleasure in quoting this short passage from the Chevalier Bunsen, because, so far as it goes, it seems to support the position advanced in the first chapter, to the effect that in the history of the English revolution the Quakers held a distinct and more advanced position in support of civil and religious liberty than did the Presbyterians, even as represented by the great intellect and wonderful cultivation of the poet Milton.

I here find myself at the completion of a labor undertaken in response to the generous offer of the Alumni Association; an undertaking which has proved a labor of love, independently of the stimulus afforded by the hope of accomplishing something, which the Society need not consider a production unworthy of one of its members.

At such a time as this through which we are living, it is particularly befitting to examine carefully the foundations upon

* Bancroft, chap. 16; Bunsen's *Signs of the Times*, letter 9. Rowntree cites also Colquhoun's *Short Sketches of some Notable Lives*, and Dixon's *Lives of Penn and Blake*, as containing acknowledgments to the same effect.

which rest our liberties, whether of State or Church. And no period of time could be selected more suitable for the study and illustration of those liberties than that period during which they sprang from a feeble, infantine condition, up to the full strength of an early manhood.

That this marvellous growth was to a considerable degree influenced by, or owing to that religious body now represented by the Society of Friends, I have endeavored to make clear; not by giving circumstantial details of the many lesser means by which they showed a spirit resolute for the defence of their privileges as Englishmen and citizens, nor yet by drawing vivid pictures of the sufferings they endured or the martyrdoms they underwent for the preservation of their purity of conscience. For it would be vain to pretend that they suffered merely to secure to themselves political advantages; the price they paid was much too great for any such paltry purchase as that alone would be. No! they found a sense of truth within them, and resolutely followed that truth careless of where it might lead them. And from their course may we draw a most striking lesson, a lesson, however, which was taught long before in the solemn words of the Founder of our religion: "If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed. Ye shall both know the truth *and the truth shall make you free.*"



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